

Choral Harmony, No. 141.

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And Exponent of the Letter-note Method.

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[One Penny.

THE LETTER-NOTE METHOD. FOR THE NEW EDUCATIONAL CODE (1882).

THE Letter-note method secures excellent results when preparing for the requirements of the New Code. As compared with either of the new notations, its advantages are as follows:—

1st. Teachers to whom the matter of *notation* is a secondary consideration, and who wish to use that which yields the best and quickest results with the least possible labour, will find Letter-note serve their purpose excellently. Letter-note gives every educational advantage afforded by the new notations, and in addition provides certain teaching facilities of its own; it is as easily or more easily taught, having the rising and falling notes of the staff to aid in studying *tune*, together with similar pictorial help as regards *time*; and, having obtained Government recognition, it gives every advantage afforded by the other systems when the pupil comes up for examination.

2nd. On the other hand, in cases where it is desired to teach the staff-notation eventually, Letter-note avoids the loss of time and labour entailed when the new time-symbolism has to be learnt first, and afterwards the old—a vital consideration, for it is admitted, even by new-notationists themselves, that two notations cannot be thoroughly taught during the time usually allowed for musical tuition in schools. Further, every Teacher knows that the notation learnt first is that which will remain most familiar and easy, simply because it is learnt first; and Letter-note secures the advantage that the student uses the staff-notation from the very commencement of his reading lessons.

Works recommended, for prices of which see list:—
Letter-note School Music,—The Junior Course,—Penny Educators.—(In preparation) The Code Singer.

FOR ADULT EVENING CLASSES, HIGH AND MIDDLE CLASS SCHOOLS.

Where vocal music only is practised, the facts of the case are precisely analogous to those above-stated, but in Colleges where the pianoforte and other instruments are taught the conditions are even more favourable for Letter-note, as here the pupil *must* learn the staff-notation. In such a case, the efficient teaching of two notations being an impossibility, the use of an easy staff-notation method becomes a *necessity* for the study of eight-singing and for purposes of voice-cultivation.

Works recommended, for prices of which see list:—
The Graduated Course and Pupil's Handbook.—The Letter-note Singing Method and Choral Guide,
—The Choral Primer,—The Elementary Singing Master and Singing School,—The Letter-note Vocalist,
—Those Numbers of Choral Harmony which are printed in Letter-note.

London: F. Pitman, 20 & 21, Paternoster Row.



THE LETTER-NOTE METHOD.



LETTER-NOTE appends to the ordinary staff notation the sol-fa initials, on a principle identical with that adopted in former years by Waite's figure method, and at the present time by the Tonic Sol-fa and Chevé methods. Experience has shown that as sight-singing pupils have to undergo two distinct processes—1st, that of cultivating the faculty of tune, and training the ear to recognise the tonality of the sounds; and 2nd, of acquiring a practical acquaintance with the symbols and characters used in musical notation—it is expedient to give the learner some educational aid in acquiring the former while the latter is being studied. Accordingly most of the methods in use at the present time either discard the staff altogether, or else add thereto during the earlier stages certain contrivances for the help of the pupil; the latter is the plan adopted and advocated by Letter-note.

The advantages claimed for Letter-note are, that the power of reading music thus printed is acquired by young pupils quite as easily as either of the new notations; and, once this degree of proficiency is attained, a very slight effort is needed in order to dispense with the aid of the sol-fa initials—so slight, in fact, that young persons often accomplish it of their own accord, without help from their teacher. Further, the notation learned first is that which is likely to remain most familiar and easy, simply because it is learned first; and Letter-note secures the advantage that the student uses the staff-notation from the very commencement of his reading lessons.

The following specimens will show the nature of Letter-note:—



God save our gra - cious Queen, Long live our no - ble Queen, God save the



Queen. Send her vic - to - ri - ous, Hap - py and glo - ri - ous,

The above are the modes of printing adopted at the commencement, at which stage the pupil needs bold and legible symbols and initial letters.

After progress has been made, when the reader is able to depend more upon the notes and uses the letter only when he is in doubt, it is found possible to reduce the size of type, and also to print the music in condensed score, without inconvenience through the multiplicity of signs—an arrangement which renders Letter-note music "as cheap as the cheapest, and as easy as the easiest." The following is a specimen of condensed score:—



These advantages, together with a very careful graduation of the lessons, will, it is hoped, render the elementary text-books useful to all engaged in the work of music-teaching. At present these training-books are well and favourably known in many of the better class seminaries of the Metropolis; the method is also extensively used in evening classes at Birmingham and other large towns.

For the guidance of teachers in making their selections, it is expedient to explain that Letter-note works adopt two distinct methods of teaching, and may be classified thus:—

The Letter-note Singing Method and Choral Guide } In these works every note throughout the Junior Course } out carries its sol-fa initial, and they The Choral Primer Letter-note School Music. } can be used by the very youngest The Penny Educators } pupil.

The Graduated Course and Pupil's Handbook } The Sol-fa initials are here gradually The Elementary Singing Master and Elementary } withdrawn, and these books can be used Singing School } to best advantage by senior scholars or adults.

An American on Sight-singing Methods.

THE lack of first-sight reading among our singers is everywhere a prominent fact, and it is notably so in our Sunday-schools, where the same tunes are sang over and over again, on account of the difficulty experienced in readily teaching the children (and adults for that matter) to sing new ones.

It is obvious that the first step towards inducing children (and adults for that matter) to love better music, and thus love music better, is to teach them more about music.

Why is it that college students who are capable of coping with the most difficult problems of Euclid, will go into raptures over some silly ditty set to music equally trivial? It is simply because, while they are giants intellectually, they are babes in music. Beefsteak is not good food for babes; they must be fed on milk.

"Those who know most love most" is just as true of music as of any of the sister arts. I love paintings; but it is not possible that my love for the art equals that of Raphael or Michael Angelo.

Most of our Sunday-school scholars are as helpless as regards learning music as a parrot is in learning to talk. Hence, all avenues of improvement are closed to them, except this parrot-like teaching, which is miserable enough at best. Teach the children to read music, and you have placed a lever in their hands with which they will of themselves remove this otherwise immovable rock of ignorance, and emerge from the slough of trash into the purified atmosphere of better music.

Having taught them to read, the way will gradually but surely open to those better things which all agree are so desirable. But how may this be done to the best advantage?

There are two extremes which I would advise you to avoid.

First—The stupid and bungling European process known as the Stationary Do method. In an extensive professional tour through Prussia, Bavaria, Bohemia, Hungary, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, France, Belgium and Holland, I observed that the masses knew but little about music. In Germany, the boasted home of music, I found that the great multitude of the people knew no more about music than what they had imbibed through the medium of lager-beer, tobacco smoke, and good listening. How many

of all the Germans in this city, are practical musicians? I venture to assert, not one in a hundred; and of those who are musicians, what proportion are singers? Again, I answer, not one in a hundred; and what is true here is true of all those European countries. And I am convinced that one of the main reasons for this state of affairs is that sum of all hindrances, the Stationary Do.

Second—In England there has arisen during the past thirty years a protest against the unreasonable Stationary Do process, which has resulted in what is called the Tonic Solfa method.

This is the opposite extreme, and while it is a great improvement on the other it is equally to be avoided in America, for while the movable Do—which made the Tonic Solfa possible in England—and which is its distinguishing feature—is universal in the United States, we have not discarded the staff notation which the Solfaists themselves do not hope to overturn. I speak from experience, for I have kept abreast of the movement during the past few years, can read that notation nearly as readily as our own, and I carefully peruse the records of their doings as printed each month in their chief organ, the *Reporter*.

In England the new notation has two advantages over the staff notation, one of which holds good here as well, but which is off-set by the disadvantage of being obliged to learn two methods of notation, for all must eventually use our staff notation. Besides, our staff notation is as simple as need be. I will promise to teach its entire principles to an intelligent person in a few hours, and in the hands of a skilful teacher with the American movable Do, it can be made to accomplish all that the other can claim, with none of its disadvantages. I have in many, many instances taken a class of beginners, and at the end of the third or fourth lesson had them singing plain music in four parts.

After having determined upon a system, combine the members of five or six schools and have them meet once a week for the purpose of studying music scientifically, and by all means let the pastors, superintendents, and teachers, be present as pupils, not as spectators—there should not be a spectator permitted in the room—everybody should participate. Four or five evenings each week could be devoted to this work, thus enabling one teacher to take charge of the study of twenty or twenty-five Sunday-schools. Grades should be established, and certificates issued to those who make most progress, which would entitle the holders to admission to a higher circle of instruction—one evening each week should also be devoted to this higher grade, for out of this grade would come your choir for all festival occasions.

which might be held in interest of Sunday-school unions, etc. Small and convenient books should be used, which should be well graded and most carefully edited by an experienced musician, severely excluding all music and words which are objectionable; and while I would not entirely avoid good secular subjects, I would hold closely to the grand aim, which is healthy religious teaching.

Within a year or two the entire Sunday-schools of the city may be able to read music, thus saving three-fourths of the time which is now spent in teaching children to sing certain tunes—not to mention the advantage of having readers of music in the great congregation at Sabbath worship.—*H. R. Palmer in "The Musical People."*

The old Method of Notation.

THE operation of mind, by which man first thought of representing the sounds of speech by signs, will for ever be a mystery; but having once attained to this discovery, he could not meet with much difficulty, we conceive, in finding the means of expressing the sounds produced in singing. The Greeks and Romans, for that purpose, made use of the letters, and parts of the letters, of their alphabet, variously combined. The Mahomedans have no signs for musical sounds. The Chinese have signs for music, which are as complicated and as odd as their language.

After several ages of unceasing struggle with the barbarian of the North, the Western empire was subdued, and fell; the arts perished with it; and there scarcely remained anything more than an indistinct recollection of them, which was gradually weakened, down to the eighth century, when even that was entirely lost. Music, especially,—that is to say, the music of the Greeks, which had delighted Rome and Italy,—was absolutely forgotten; and all that remained of it was what those two fathers of the church, Saint Ambrose and Saint Gregory, had preserved for divine service. The melodies were so simple, or rather so limited, that few signs were necessary to write them; and these signs were formed of certain letters of the alphabet.

But, while the Latin nations made use of these signs, the Lombards and Goths, whose power was established in Italy, introduced others, on a different plan; for the latter represented not only individual sounds, but combinations of sounds, and even whole phrases. The large libraries contain manuscripts, in which we find these

signs applied to the vocal music of the church; and thus we are enabled to decipher them, by comparing them with the same music written in the Latin tongue.

It is remarkable, moreover, that those nations of the East, who have thought of representing sounds by signs, have understood the use of these only as means of expressing collections of sounds by a single sign, instead of separating them into their most simple elements. This peculiarity must be ascribed to their taste for excessive ornament in their melodies, which would have rendered the reading of music extremely difficult, if they had not found means to represent several sounds by a single sign. The signs which are still in use in the Greek churches of the East are of this kind; they were invented by a monk—John of Damascus.

It would be difficult, at this day, to fix the precise epoch when the notes of the *plain-chant* (from which the modern notation is derived) were devised: there are examples of it in the manuscripts of the first half of the eleventh century; but there is no proof that they were not invented at a more distant period. It is well, also, to remark, that at that time there was no uniform system of signs for the writing of music. Every master had his own; he communicated it to his pupils; and one could scarce go from one little district to another, without being obliged to study a new one.—*Fetis.*

Application of Common-Sense to the Teaching of the Pianoforte.

THE following excellent Lecture, transcribed from the *Musical Standard*, was recently delivered by Mr. Aquilar. We cordially agree with the whole of it, except in the matter of learning the pianoforte as an introduction to all music. Our own experience is, that voice and ear should first be trained by systematic drilling in sight-singing; which done, it becomes a comparatively easy task to learn to play instrumental music.

When the world perceives the utility and necessity of applying common sense to the study of the art of playing on the piano, the power of learning to play correctly and effectively pieces presenting difficulties of execution, as also the ability to decipher accurately and pleasantly accompaniments, melodies, and pieces presenting

no executive difficulty, would be as universally attainable as reading, grammar, writing, and arithmetic.

Although such an improvement in the cultivation of music, would undoubtedly increase the number of excellent pianists, we have, nevertheless, no right to expect that first-class public playing will be more frequently met with than is special excellence in any other pursuit, art, or science. The wonderful performances we occasionally hear proceed mostly from the possession of a rare combination of intellectual and physical powers, independently of immense natural musical talent and genius. To put this idea in as few words as possible, the conjunction of extraordinary musical talent, extraordinary memory, and exceptional physique in the same individual must always be of rare occurrence.

Such an improvement in the cultivation of music would be equally the means of enabling amateurs to play in drawing-rooms in a manner pleasant to hear even by cultivated ears; and of so increasing the admiration and appreciation of first-class playing, and of first-class music, as to multiply the number of, and augment the attendance at, concerts where such are to be heard.

The first step towards this result is that every child, boy or girl, be carefully and properly instructed in the rudiments of pianoforte playing, even if apparently destitute of any natural disposition for music.

Although every child should learn the piano, it is by no means desirable that everyone should be a pianist.

The piano should be considered as the introduction to all music, vocal or instrumental, and the grammar of musical notation (if I may be allowed the expression) should be learnt in childhood at the piano.

Any child of tolerable industry and obedience may be taught the piano by anyone who knows how to teach.

Anyone who has been properly taught will be able to teach a child the rudiments of pianoforte playing as easily as the alphabet and reading.

The time given daily to learning the pianoforte, independently of its musical use, assists in developing powers of perception, calculation, and combination of ideas, besides giving some aid in obtaining manual neatness and dexterity.

There is nothing more detrimental to the cultivation of music than the remarks frequently made by parents and others interested in education, as to whether such a child will or will not ever play. Who would commit such an absurdity as to wonder in a child's presence whether he will read or will not read while he is learning the alphabet!

Although most desirable that the details of touch, notation, and time, should be learnt during childhood, there is no reason why people of any age should not learn to play on the piano, provided they can and will devote an hour daily to a properly directed study of the subject.

In many cases talent is latent or dormant, and will be satisfactorily developed by study, just as water can be obtained by digging in places where it is not at first to be perceived.

Even when it can be plainly seen that, with the talent possessed, and small time that can be given, no great proficiency can be aspired to, there is no cause for discouragement nor relaxation of efforts.

The fact that everyone cannot aspire to be a first-rate speaker, author, penman, or mathematician, does not, in the least, prevent anyone learning reading, grammar, writing or arithmetic, nor does it in the least detract from our admiration and appreciation of first-class eloquence, great literary attainments, model calligraphy, or extraordinary calculating powers. Now everyone possessed of the smallest amount of mental ability may acquire the power of reading distinctly, writing intelligibly (both in a grammatical and calligraphic sense), or ciphering sufficiently for ordinary purposes.

Let us now observe in a general way how common-sense is applied to various useful or vitally important arts and sciences. It appears this is done by organizing a careful collection of necessary materials; a careful examination that the materials are of the proper quality and have been properly prepared; a proper combination of the necessary materials; and, lastly, a careful adoption of such precautionary measures as are necessary to keep the materials thus artistically and scientifically combined from being separated, or as a whole rendered useless by the effects of such wear and tear or such injurious influences as may have to be encountered.

The power of playing on the pianoforte is, in fact, the power of using readily and simultaneously certain intellectual and physical powers. These powers are as follows:—1. The instantaneous recognition of the keys of the instrument indicated by the notes on the paper; 2. The instantaneous recognition of the relative duration of the notes; 3. The instantaneous recognition of the meaning of every peculiarity of notation, sign, and character used in pianoforte music; 4. The instantaneous application of the fingering of scales and chords to all passages constructed from scales or chords; 5. The concentration of sufficient attention to repeat each portion of what requires practising a sufficient number of times to impress it upon the mind and to impart force of habit to

the fingers; 6. The ability to hold the hand in the proper position; 7. The ability to hold the fingers constantly in the right position, whether in close or extended positions of the hand; 8. The ability to lift or drop any finger or fingers at a given moment, always holding them in the proper position; 9. The ability to lift or drop the whole hand from the wrist-joint, without, in any way disturbing the position of the fingers.

There is not any one of these ingredients of piano-forte playing that cannot be acquired through sufficient perseverance in a few minutes daily, properly directed by anyone who will take the trouble. Even children, when tolerably industrious and properly taught, are able at an early age to read notes, keeping time, holding the hand, and using the fingers properly. The necessary powers, should, for the most part, be developed separately, and the attempts to use them simultaneously must be gradual and careful to an extreme degree.

Some simple and short writing exercises should be given, which, while improving the power of reading combinations, would annihilate the difficulty that transposition of music presents to many, and give an insight into the science of harmony.

It is reasonably to be hoped and expected that the same application of common-sense that would multiply the number of competent amateurs would materially lessen the labours and increase the powers of those striving to become great pianists.

It is no disparagement of what has as yet been done to assert that the general application of common-sense would materially facilitate, increase, and improve the cultivation and appreciation of pianoforte playing.

An immense amount of manufacturing and travelling was performed by mankind before the invention of the steam-engine, but the general application of steam power has greatly multiplied and improved all that was formerly effected without it. The art of printing is not less valuable because some of the greatest poets and historians flourished before its invention. Common-sense is just such a simple but powerful moral element; the grand desideratum being to apply it as successfully to the study of the pianoforte as steam is applied to machinery.

Those natural powers which will materially assist the acquirement of proficiency in pianoforte playing are: ear for harmony, ear for melody, accurate perception of rhythm, natural capability for mental acquirement, quickness of perception, steady and industrious application, rapid and accurate combination of ideas, calculation, poetic feeling, self-possession, strength, independency,

and proper action of hands and fingers. It is by no means an uncommon occurrence to find persons in whom one or more of these powers is in a state of natural activity and applicability.

The teacher should carefully observe in what points the pupil is strong or weak. The strong point should be used only just sufficiently to keep them in full force, while those that are weak are carefully strengthened so as to equalise the whole. There is no greater error than to suppose that, unless already possessed of ear, it is useless to attempt to learn the piano. On the contrary, if no ear be perceptible, there is no better way of producing and developing it than learning the piano. In the first stages of this study the senses of sight and feeling (as applied to touch) are all important. In fact, at the commencement, unless beginners are tolerably attentive and industrious, the sense of hearing might be advantageously dispensed with.

Even when one or more of the requisite powers is dormant, and no perceptible effect is produced after repeated efforts, there is to be no discouragement nor relaxation of labour; a continuation of properly made efforts will assuredly develop sufficient activity to enable whatever powers are already possessed to be successfully exerted.

Thus, the universal acquirability of the necessary powers for playing the piano, which would render it universally attainable by all civilised nations, would immensely increase the cultivation and appreciation of music as an intellectual and artistic recreation, and also diminish such delays and disappointments as too frequently blight or materially injure the career of numerous pianoforte students even when distinguished talent is combined with energetic industry, exemplary patience, and the highest aspiration.

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THE LETTER-NOTE METHOD.

I believe I was one of the very first teachers to take up the Letter-note method in the country, and certainly can claim to be the first to teach the system in the Midlands; and now, after 20 years' experience, am able to say I am more than ever convinced that it is by far the best method of teaching to sing at sight. It embodies all the best points of the Sol-fa method, and from the earliest stages pupils are accustomed to sing from the universal notation.

Erdington, Birmingham, May 21st, 1880.

THOMAS G. LOCKER,
*Conductor of Perry Barr Choral Society, Sutton Coldfield Philharmonic Society
Camphill Amateur Musical Society, Birmingham Musical Union, etc.*

I have much pleasure in stating that I have used the Letter-note method for 10 years in Schools and Collegiate Seminaries, giving an average of 20 lessons per week, and after trying most other systems I am quite convinced the Letter-note is decidedly the best. The text-books are systematic and thorough; my pupils are very much interested in their lessons, make rapid progress, and soon learn to sing at sight from the established Notation. I have a large number of letters from Principals of Schools, expressing themselves highly pleased with the Letter-note method.

The Park, Tottenham, London, Nov. 2nd, 1880.

JOHN ADLEY.

I cordially welcome any measures that may facilitate the reading of Choral Music by the masses, and am of opinion that the Letter-note method is well calculated to that end. It combines the principles of the ordinary Tonic Sol-fa system with those of the Staff notation, and dispenses of some of the objections which have been urged against the former.

London, Nov. 6th, 1880.

CHARLES E. STEPHENS, *Hon. Mem. R.A.M.*

With pleasure I testify that the specimens of the Letter-note method obligingly forwarded are clear, practical and useful. The method has too a special value, as standing in an explanatory attitude between the Staff notation and Tonic Sol-fa method, and so being of assistance to students of either principle.

London, Nov. 10th, 1880.

E. H. TURPIN,
*Hon. Sec. and Member of Board of Examiners, College of Organists,
Examiner, College of Preceptors; etc.*

I am sure your system is an additional facility to the teaching of sight-singing.

London, Nov. 17th, 1880.

EDWIN M. LOTT,

Visiting Examiner, International College of Music, London.

I am happy to say I think the Letter-note system is likely to be of great benefit to the Choral Societies and Classes in which I am introducing it. I can give no better testimonial than the fact of my having adopted it everywhere.

Dollar, Dec. 15th, 1880.

JAMES M'HARDY.

I have much pleasure in stating that the Letter-note method has been adopted by a Class in Birmingham of nearly 200 members, of which I am the Teacher, and I consider the method excellent.

Birmingham, Dec. 16th, 1880.

ALFRED R. GAUL, *Mus. Bac. Cantab.,*

Professor of Harmony and Singing at the Midland Institute.

Your system, I feel quite sure, is an admirable one.

Birmingham, January 3rd, 1881.

C. SWINNERTON HEAP, *Mus. Doo. Cantab.,*

Conductor of the Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent,

Walsall, Stafford, and Stone Philharmonic Societies.

Your system seems to me to retain most of what is so good in the Tonic Sol-fa System: I mean the associating the same syllables with semitones, and the characteristic effect of each number of the scale.

July 9th, 11.

SIR ROBERT STEWART, *Mus. Doc.,*

University Professor of Music at Dublin.

The marvellous results obtained by the Tonic Sol-fa notation as regards sight-singing should, if possible, be secured to students of the established system, and this problem he believed had been solved by the Letter-note method.

From a Lecture delivered at Trinity College, London, by HUMPHREY J. STARK, Esq., MUS. BAC.

The undermentioned gentlemen have kindly signified their approval of the method in the following terms:—

"We are quite of opinion that the Letter-note Method is well calculated to produce good results in training to sing at sight."

W. S. BAMBRIDGE, *Esq., Mus. Bac. Oxon., Professor of Music at Marlborough College.*

EDMUND T. CHIPP, *Esq., Mus. Doc. Cantab., Organist of Ely Cathedral.*

SIR GEORGE J. ELVEY, *Mus. Doc. Oxon., Organist of Her Majesty's Chapel, Windsor.*

WILLIAM LEMNAHE, *Esq., Organist and Director of the Choir of St. Mary, Newington, and Conductor of the Brixton Choral Society, London.*

REV. SIR F. A. G. OUSELEY, *Bart., Mus. Doc. Oxon., Professor of Music at Oxford University.*

BRINLEY RICHARDS, *Esq., M.R.A.M., London.*

J. GORDON SAUNDERS, *Esq., Mus. Doc. Oxon., Professor of Harmony at Trinity College, London.*

GEORGE SHINN, *Esq., Mus. Bac. Cantab., Organist and Choirmaster of Brixton Church, London.*

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The Staff Ladder. Same as the Sol-fa Ladder, but with the addition of the staff-lines. Can be set so as to show the DO on any line or space, for which purpose it should be mounted on rollers according to directions supplied. Paper only, 1s. 6d.; canico, with rollers, 7s. 6d. For descriptive leaflet apply as directed above for Sol-fa Ladder.

The Movable DO Ladder. Same as the Staff Ladder, but the staff-lines are separate from the diagram, and the latter is movable upwards or downwards, permitting the DO to be set to any line or space. Canico, with rollers, 10s.; paper only, 1s. For descriptive leaflet apply as directed above for Sol-fa Ladder.

The Transposition Index. A card with a movable index, useful for the purpose of explaining the theory of keys, transposition, modulation, etc. 6d.

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The Quaver, with which is published CHORAL HARMONY, a monthly musical Journal, price one penny, including the music.

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